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ABSTRACT

This paper considers the role of education in influencing the political, economic, and social status of blacks, focusing particularly on the issue of educational testing and the activities of the Educational Testing Service (ETS). The failure of the educational system to effect significant changes in the status of blacks relative to whites is discussed and the role of social science in creating instruments that justify unequal educational treatment is examined. The author's experiences at ETS are described in terms of his involvement in the institution's efforts to redesign educational tests in order to remove their bias against minorities. It is stressed, however, that even the fairest of tests cannot alone achieve equality of opportunity, because other criteria can be invoked to perpetuate social discrimination. It is also held that principal problems black educators face in their struggle to eliminate bias are their white colleagues' (1) general unfamiliarity with life styles of common folk in general and black people in particular, and (2) theoretically based orientations. Other crucial problems in the areas of research and testing are outlined and, finally, current efforts underway at ETS relating to minority education are described. (GC)

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N. Y. Conference Of Black Educators

"Inner City Schools in Crisis--Can We Meet The Challenge?"
or "Do We Want To Meet The Challenge"?

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There is an interesting book quietly making its rounds in the academic circles whose title is Schooling in Capitalist America.[1] It was written by two supposedly radical economists at the University of Massachusetts.

The book raises the following points that are worth consideration by anyone concerned with the education of minorities and particularly Blacks. For example:

- The authors argue that although education is often considered a means of increasing equality or at least equality of opportunity, historically education has had little effect on inequality. The level of income depends far more on S.E.S. background than on educational attainment.
- The authors argue that education in certain ways actually serves to maintain economic inequality through socializing children to accept certain power relations, to adopt certain personality traits, and to develop a self-image corresponding to each child's eventual placement in the workplace hierarchy. They also suggest that there is a strong correspondence between educational structure and process and workplace structure and process.
- They present historical data which support an argument that the structure of education has largely been determined by those

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groups with economic power. To some extent, education has been consciously shaped by the needs of the economic elite to create an obedient, passive workforce.

The authors summarize their critique by stating, "It is the prerogatives of capital and the imperatives of profit, not human capacities and technical realities which render U. S. schooling what it is."

Many people (without considering the substance of the comments) would ignore the statement as the propaganda of two Marxist-leaning professionals, because they find the propositions as distasteful as they did the earlier writings of DuBois.

I would suggest that these comments may serve to answer some long-standing questions of Black leaders and others interested in the relative inability of Blacks to make political, economic, and social changes in the American society using education as a vehicle.

Some Black educators, such as my friend and former mentor, Dr. Samuel Proctor, would argue that education for Blacks has been the only avenue for upward mobility, but even he must concede that given the efforts expended by Blacks from the reconstruction period to the present, the returns have not equaled the efforts.

Although there are more Blacks in college at present than ever before, more Black college graduates than at any other time, more Black high school graduates, more Blacks in higher income brackets, etc., there are also more Whites attending and graduating from college than in any period of history. Relatively speaking, we are losing ground in closing the income gap between Black high school graduates and White high school graduates, Black college graduates and White college graduates.

I would suggest that another quotation from Bowles and Gintes regarding John Dewey, the educational theorist, that "Dewey held that increasing equality of opportunity was among the three most important functions of education," has never been expanded to Blacks and, it could be argued, has historically been given a low priority. The other two functions, according to Dewey, were personal development and socialization or integration into the existing society.

Dewey, continuing his theory which apparently excluded Blacks, wrote: "It is the office of the school environment to see to it that each individual gets an opportunity to escape from the limitations of the social group in which he was born, and to come into living contact with a broader environment." This statement brings us into serious confrontation with Mr. Dewey's philosophies, because there has been a long-standing belief that Blacks neither were intellectually capable of sharing in a hypothesized democratic society nor had earned the right to share it in or both. Some historians[2] have said that these feelings were inherited from the English, while some psychologists suggest that they were rationalizations adopted by the slave-holders to justify a system which was incompatible with the democratic theories upon which America was developed.

Whatever the reasons, we have had, throughout our history in America[3], significant white power figures raising the question of the alleged intellectual inferiority of Blacks. What has been the purpose? To control and exploit a group of people identifiable by color, and therefore provide a constant pool of low level laborers to do the most menial job? Or to assure that the largest portion of this minority group never becomes a serious competitive threat to restructure the society along some more

equitable base? Assuming that the latter is the case, education and the use of tests and other measuring instruments would seem to have been effectively manipulated to perform that function. By first separating the schools, historically we have always been able to eliminate certain individuals from competition for higher education, for better jobs, and for higher status in the American social system.

What does all of this have to do with testing? A great deal. If the crises of the 1960's and '70's were due to the inner cities, and if the inner cities are largely Black with Black predominance in the public schools, and if test scores determine progress in those schools, admission to college and admission to the job market, the question of who produces those tests and determines what goes into them (content), as well as whether the tests are valid for the population they are intended for (validity), is critical.

Blacks have long been aware of the negative influence of the social sciences upon their efforts for equality in America. In too many instances tests and other supposedly objective assessments have been the instruments for justifying unequal treatment.

Henry C. Garrett, in addition to his influential position at Columbia University, was at one time President of the prestigious American Psychological Association. This is important because most of the psychologists who develop tests and analyze results in schools, colleges, etc., are or have been members of the APA and have certainly at one time or another been exposed to his racist writings regarding the hereditary differences in IQ's between Blacks and Whites[4].

When one considers the impact upon the social and political policy of the Federal Government that an organization such as the APA has and continues to have, it is no surprise that Blacks feel that tests and testing organizations which stress differences in IQ, educational achievement level, and aptitude are parties to an institutionalized racist social system.

Some Blacks identify Garrett's racist position[4] with segregation and integrationist efforts in the south in the late 1950's and point out that he warned that intellectual harm would befall White students in an integrated society. Other Blacks have pointed out the effect that Jensen had upon the compensatory education efforts of the late 1960's and '70's.

As a result of the negative impact and questionable orientation of many of our visible social scientists, we are currently witnessing the division of many large traditional social sciences organizations along the lines of race--for example, the split of Black members of APA to form the Association of Black Psychologists, of which I am a member. We have also witnessed the split of the sociologists group into a national body of Black sociologists.

Usually the splits have been the result of differences regarding long held theories upon which the discipline has developed. Splintering Black professionals have no longer been satisfied with allowing these detrimental theories to go unchallenged, and in many cases their opposition has been vindicated on the basis of a reanalysis of the data, how they were collected, assumptions made concerning the data, etc.

Educational Testing Service, where I work, has in many ways been in the center of the controversy for many years, mainly due to what many people see as its gatekeeping role. ETS develops the SAT, whose scores

colleges use to sort out persons for admission to higher education, and therefore, eventually to better jobs. It develops the NTE, which has been used by school boards to determine which college graduates qualify for jobs as teachers. It develops the GRE, which is used by graduate and professional schools to determine the persons admitted to Master's and doctoral programs and, therefore, to the higher paying and more prestigious jobs.

When you look at the low percentage of minorities in the professional jobs you can readily understand why people would say that ETS is the culprit because it constructs the tests which contain the test items which Blacks and minorities don't relate to, score low on and which consequently, deter them from admission to the colleges they desire to attend.

I would like to state at the outset that ETS's position is made clear in all of its test publications: That the test scores alone should not be used to determine admission to or rejection from a college, and that the scores should be one part of a total assessment including grade point averages, letters of recommendation, and consideration of the past overall activity of the student under consideration.

Without going further into the proper use and misuse of tests, I have heard many of my co-workers at ETS declare that they feel the general public has the notion that tests can be used to rearrange what is basically a society built on the exploitation of certain groups. It can't be done. In some of the instances that I have had an opportunity to be involved with, tests have been designed which seem to allow for more minorities into a job--and the particular system then shifted the decision to another area which negatively affected minorities. For example, in the selection of

police officers, where a new test increases the pool of qualifying applicants, the system eliminates applicants on the basis of a character investigation or credit reputation, etc.

ETS has another area of work which is not as commonly known as its development of tests, which I am much more familiar with and have spent most of my time at ETS working in--that is, the research area, which I would like to mention briefly.

Nine years ago when I was hired by ETS, I came from Philadelphia as the field coordinator of a large research project, The Longitudinal Study of the Development of Disadvantaged Children. At this point, I think it would be important to give you a little additional background on myself. I came from a disadvantaged, near-orphanage background in Philadelphia, had dropped out of high school after one year to enter the Armed Forces, spent two enlistments in the military overseas, and after eventually returning to Philadelphia, attended Temple University and the University of Pennsylvania with no home support, entered the police department, worked with street gangs, worked as a parole officer, and was quite involved in the 1950's and '60's in community and civil rights efforts. This was quite a varied and unique background compared to other professionals at ETS at that time.

My role as coordinator of what became to be known as the LSD study was to help select the cities for the study, to enlist the necessary support of political and community leaders and, in general, to assure the implementation and smooth continuity of the study. This was to be a major effort for an organization like ETS which had never done anything at this level in the field.

I found myself at ETS in almost daily and constant confrontation with academic and technical Ph.D.'s regarding the persons who should be hired (local community people vs. clipboard college-grad students), what variables should be considered in family life and community, what the experiences of low income people were (textbook theories vs. reality), or whether community or technical people should have priorities in local management.

Nine years later the study is still going on, a log of theories have been exploded, and many reports have been written, but the traumatic and emotional impact on ETS was devastating and in one case almost fatal, when in a three-way argument over hiring practicies between the project director (a Ph.D. with a national reputation), an ETS personnel staff member, and me, the personnel staff person had a heart attack and was out for six months.

My next venture was involvement in a national evaluation of Street Academy progress in six major cities, with much the same responsibilities except that they included more direct involvement in the evaluation and acquainting of local street academy staff with testing procedures. The amount of friction was somewhat reduced due partly to my own reputation and the flexibility of the project director. Nevertheless, much of the in-service training and orientation to real life situations situations which I had to provide in the first project had to be repeated in the second and subsequent projects.

The point I raise here is that the most crucial issues I have had to face are the basic unfamiliarity with life styles of common folk and Black people in particular and the theoretically based orientations of key White staff members.

It would have been much easier, certainly on me, not to have been confrontative regarding hypotheses, data collection, instrument development, and in some cases the analysis of data and simply sit back and let the projects flow the way White staff wanted them to. But I believe strongly that as Blacks, if we don't try to make a difference when we find ourselves in certain positions, we don't deserve to be there.

I felt that my familiarity and personal experiences were so far in excess of anything that these people had that they should not and would not be compromised with academic degrees or textbook theory.

If I were to list the crisis areas in my experience at ETS, in addition to the ones I've mentioned, they would include the following: Realizations that

(1) conditions and techniques of a research investigation can significantly influence the data obtained and the results and interpretations made.

(2) any type of study with a psychological basis with psychoanalytic explanations and treatment cannot be complete without an analysis of the types and particularly the layers of defenses peculiar to the person or culture.

(3) one basic model of psychoanalytic thought for analyzing behavior should be the theory built around the defense points of the id, ego, superego and external reality of the Black experience in America.

(4) the issue of whether the researcher or the community and subject have priority in data collection, rights of privacy etc. should be established in favor of the community.

(5) the question of the benefit of the research to the community or subject should be clearly identified, communicated to the community.

(6) the research designs built may be inappropriate to carry out in the real world.

(7) input from black researchers, or black people into the design, implementation and analysis of the data from the initial research effort is necessary.

(8) researchers must decide which provides for more meaningful information--quantitatively based or qualitavely based research efforts.

I would say the most crucial problem ETS faces is divided into testing and research:

In the testing area:

(1) Trying to effect a change in the response of minorities on tests without losing what they (ETS) consider the quality of the test and its appropriateness for the majority population (that is, content and validity).

(2) Trying to communicate to the general population that bad results from a test derived from how it is used (inappropriate use for what it was developed to do).

(3) Attempting to communicate to the general population the real issue concerning minorities and testing, not the least of which is institutionalized racism.

In the research area:

(1) Who should do the research and what purposes should the research serve?

(2) How do you acquire the financial support to do the research, which in many cases depends upon the funding agency, particularly governmental agencies?

(3) How does one assure that meaningful research, once done, although controversial gets into the public domain and serves as the foundation for positive change?

What efforts are currently underway at ETS? Many people would say nothing in the area of testing, but I don't think that is completely true. For example:

(a) ETS is in the center of the competency based testing movement, helping states develop instruments to be used in measuring basic skill levels for assessing mastry at the high school level. (I'm somewhat excited about this because I think it will lead to some major changes in the quality of the high school students we turn out, in addition to some other changes in the school systems that will be effected - for example, the practice of promotion for social or economic reasons.

(b) There has been a greater effort to include minority members on test development committees, although many of them represent positions close to those held by majority members.

(c) There has been an effort to tie test items to the actual skills need to accomplish certain kinds of jobs for which a test is developed (for example, Police and Fire Exams, health fields, Real Estate, and other professional positions.)

In the research area new directions have been the efforts of some researchers to acquire the financial support for each in areas directly related to critical issues.

For example, Dr. Fred McDonald has done a study on the effects of teachers on student learning for the California Commission for teacher preparation and licensing under a grant from the National Institute of Education. His findings indicated what most Blacks already knew and had been saying a long time: Some teaching styles are more effective than others. He found out that combinations of teaching performance, rather than any single performance, account for the effectiveness of instruction particularly as it relates to subject matter and grade level (43 elementary schools involved, 95 teachers, 2nd and 5th grade levels, students tested in Fall and Spring to measure achievement in Reading and Mathematics and their attitudes toward the subject.)

ETS recently completed a National Study of exemplary desegragated school districts using race relations and achievement as the measure of success, in which I participated as a professional. Forty-eight southern elementary schools and 48 southern high schools which were involved in an earlier phase of the study were supplemented by 46 elementary and 24 high schools from the north and west. The main findings of the study were that principals can make a difference in the process of desegretation; that racial interaction must take place between Black students and White students, as well as between Black faculty and White faculty; that good relations are associated with several school characteristics such as a principal who is rated high by his faculty, the use of multiracial curricular material, and support for integration which is shared by teachers, administrators, and students.

Dr. Belvin Williams of ETS has been focusing on helping ETS to continue to honor its commitment to the improvement of educational and developmental opportunities for minority members, through a bifocal approach to this problem area. The basic focus will be through knowledge production and relevance in knowledge utilization.

What I see at the major areas yet unresolved in rearch at ETS would include:

(a) The question of whether ETS should be in applied research or theoretical research. If theory-based research is the direction, is it enough to suppose someone else will follow-up to attempt to solve newly suggested social problems?

(b) The question of whether ETS shouldn't be about the business of rethinking and rearranging some of its priorities for research and include those populations which they have traidtionally ignored--the non college going groups, dropouts, prisoners, etc. ETS must decide if it wants to become an advocate for change for some of these groups, and adopt an image that will allow them to be seen as providing support for positive change rather than as part of the problem.

(c) The question of whether ETS will be willing to select minority representatives on its research efforts as staff members, advisory people etc., who can represent a different point of view in a dicipline and, additionaly be willing to confront, verbally and otherwise, long-standing theories and assumptions within that discipline in their interface with majority staff members on research efforts at ETS. Some of us at ETS would like to think we are doing just that.

[1]Bowles, S. & Ginitis, H. Schooling in Capitalist America-Educational Reform and the Contraddictions of Economic LIfe. Basic Books, Inc. Publishers - New York,

[2]Osofsky, G. The Burden of Race. A Documentary History of Negro-White Relations in America. New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1967.

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[3]Osofsky, G. The Burden of Race. A documentary history of Negro-White relations in America. New York & Evanston: Harper & Row, 1967 5 & 6, 511-515.

[4]Osofsky, G., p. 512